

CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

November 25, 2013

[In these minutes: Policy review; ALC teaching experience discussion.]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Patricia Schaber (Chair), Brad Cohen, Roberta Kehne, Jeffrey Lindgren, Peggy McCarthy, Daniel Orth, Maria Sera, Kevin Smith, Susan Staats, Christine Swartwout, Jeremy Todd, Thomas Wolfe

REGRETS: Mary Jetter

ABSENT: Christopher Isett, Barbara Jensen, Katherine Kroph, Connor Schaefer

WELCOME

Professor Schaber welcomed those present and called the meeting to order.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT POLICY REVIEW

Professor Alon McCormick, chair of SCEP, attended the meeting to discuss the deletion of the Classroom Management Policy. SCEP has recommended that this policy be either deleted or edited because there is no incentive or consequence within the policy. There are no consequences for violating the values that are described; therefore it is not recommended that it remain a policy as it currently is written. Professor McCormick continued that it is a statement of values, therefore should it exist somewhere else? Members made the following comments:

- Mr. Todd noted that much of the information can be found in policies specifically for instructors and students, and there are definitions that are listed through OCM's website. He added that other institutions have a "Learning Space Master Plan" (LSMP) that would include this information.
- Members discussed the options of recommending the University create a LSMP that would contain this information and behavior expectations, or housing the information on the OCM website.
- Flexible office space should be considered, especially for those instructors in ALCs.

Members agreed that the current policy should no longer be a policy, but they would like to establish a set of norms with consideration of a LSMP.

TEACHING IN AN ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM (ALC)

Professor David Matthes, Biology Program and Dept. of Genetics, Cell Biology and Development was invited to the meeting to share his experience teaching in an ALC. He shared the following information:

- He has managed to double student's learning gain through: doubling motivation, multiple points of contact (reading+), getting them to talk and think, and empowerment.
- He has been able to help students achieve university's student developmental outcomes and encourage:
 1. Responsibility and Accountability
 2. Independence and Interdependence
 3. Goal Orientation
 4. Self Awareness
 5. Resilience
 6. Appreciation of Differences
 7. Tolerance of Ambiguity
- The classroom supports the adoption of what are recognized as best practices in college education: student-centered inquiry, team-based learning, cooperative learning, constructivism, multiple intelligences, authentic investigation. He added that evolution is profoundly affected by physical and social environment and this is true for courses, too
- The ALC has enabled him:
 - to help students practice the intellectual work of a scientist: discovery, innovation, and design.
 - to truly team teach where faculty coach students as they work on their projects.
 - to finally understand how the "coverage paradox" is best understood: the answer to those who will oppose the shift from lecture because "how can I cover as much?"
 - to understand the necessity of expectation management with students.
 - to understand the public relations / student recruitment value of ALCs: we're open to change; we're on the cutting edge.
 - to understand the value in learning of showing faculty how to make use of the ALC rooms. Training / coaching is needed for best effect.
 - to appreciate what outstanding classroom service looks like.

Members posed the following questions and Professor Matthes replied:

- Do you choose to put your class in the room because of what you can do or do you change what you do in response to the room?
 - The room changes the users' behavior. As an instructor, you shift your course to have more student collaboration and less lecturing. This is one of the greatest qualities of the room.
- Should users of rooms be made to get certified (e.g. by a workshop series) before being able to have their course assigned to an active learning classroom?

- This could be done with some care as to how it was put in place. Early on we just wanted people to use the room. Perhaps now as demand exceeds ability to accommodate it, it might be a good idea. Co-teaching with someone who “gets” the room is a great way to start. A lower bar would be to require sitting in on current ALC users’ classes for a few times. It would be positive for instructors to be educated on best practices, but this could also present a barrier.
- Should current users of ALCs be given priority in having their courses reassigned to ALCs in future semesters?
 - Yes, but not so that others are excluded. The current users will be your most vocal advocates for new ALCs to come online. Potential users would be less likely to be advocates for more ALC spaces, as they wouldn’t yet know how useful they would be.
- Should there be some recognition that if courses in ALCs require more student work than courses taught in a traditional lecture hall, then there should also be some coordinated effort to reduce that imbalance in recognition of the need to keep student workload manageable?
 - This should be addressed when it becomes recognized as a problem. If we want our students to be successful, lifelong learners we need to get them to read confidently and efficiently.
- Is there a greater than normal faculty workload that comes with teaching in an ALC? Or in converting a course to be taught in an ALC?
 - It does take time to convert a course. Writing learning readiness quizzes, team challenges, and long-term project descriptions. However, ongoing preparation and feedback time is not much different than when he taught a lecture course.
- Did you use CTL services (e.g. workshops) to help you prepare to teach in the ALCs?
 - Yes, they have been helpful. Also, teaching Preparing Future Faculty courses with CTL staff has been illuminating. I do tend to read about and go to seminars about the scholarship of teaching and learning more than my colleagues. The room makes it worthwhile to, also.
- What of all the technology in the ALC would I let go of if needed to keep the cost of the ALCs down?
 - While the computers are very nice – particularly for ensuring equity among students – many students do bring their own computers so there could be fewer. The displays are great – and open up a world of possibilities for using media and for allowing students to collaborate (e.g. being on the same page during discussions, showing their work to others in the room). But in my experience the tables, table-microphones and white boards are most important.
- What is the benefit of having permanent teams?
 - It takes a while for trust to build and for teams to find their optimal performance (storming -> norming -> performing). It allows us to arrange teams for maximum diversity within the team and similarity in talent composition between different teams once at the start of the semester and

then let them get to know each other (building community) and have the conditions for the appearance of co-operation (tit for tat -> working for the benefit of the team and because of esprit de corps).

- Could you work with movable tables that could be arranged into clusters by the students at the start of class and put back at the end?
 - Not for classes as big as I teach given the sheer pandemonium (and floor scratching) there would be if table had to be rearranged twice per class period. It would put a big damper on the ease of using the classroom for active learning and might also lead to inter-faculty squabbles as to how the room should be left, again putting a damper on the innovative arrangement in favor of status quo.
- Is there value to being able to have food in the classroom?
 - It helps build community whenever there are permanent teams that engage in food sharing, often taking turns as to who brings food each class period (or project day). Instructors could be further educated about how to present the option to students. And the signage in the classroom encouraging “leaving the room as clean as you found it” are good and appropriate. An available rag and cleaning solution (in storage closets) might help people be spill “first responders”; currently paper towels are used for this.
- Is there one thing that would make working in the ALCs better?
 - Keeping them to the current high standard of service.

In the interest of time, Professor Schaber adjourned the meeting.

Jeannine Rich
University Senate Office